

# **The Role of Pharmacies in Administering the COVID-19 Vaccine**



**Presentation to the  
NC House Committee on Health**

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**February 9, 2021**

# Authority of Pharmacists to Administer the COVID-19 Vaccine

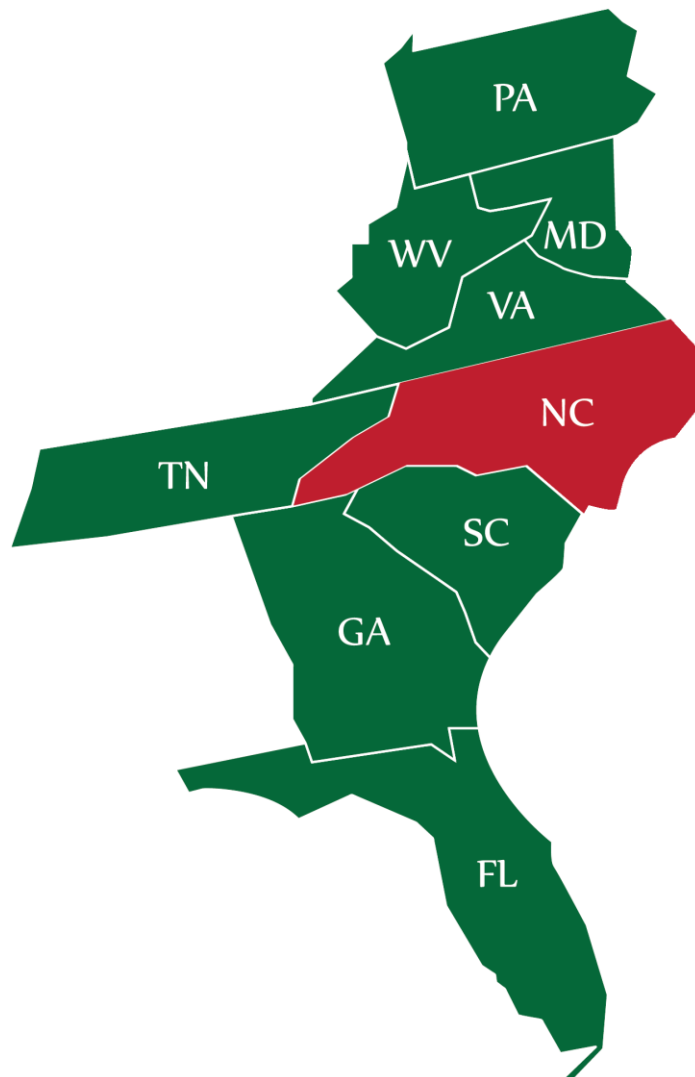
- Senate Bill 704, enacted in May 2020, authorized the State Health Director to issue a statewide standing order allowing immunizing pharmacists to administer the COVID-19 Vaccine.
- Dr. Betsey Tilson, State Health Director, issued this statewide standing order on December 27, 2020.
- Federal PREP Act authorized pharmacists to order and administer the COVID-19 Vaccine (October 29, 2020).
- Federal PREP Act preempts state law and also allows properly trained pharmacy-technicians and pharmacy-interns to administer the COVID-19 Vaccine.

# Why Pharmacies Can Play an Important Role in Administering the COVID-19 Vaccine

- 95% of Americans live within 5 miles of a pharmacy.
- Many North Carolinians visit a pharmacy every month to receive their medications.
- Pharmacies administer a large number of vaccines like influenza and shingles.
- A trusted, accessible and convenient health care provider both in rural and urban areas.
- Medicaid recipients tend to have greater health issues, are less mobile and are more dependent on public transportation.
- According to a recent article in JAMA, Medicaid recipients visit their pharmacies 35 times a year.

# Snapshot of States Where Pharmacists Are Currently Administering the COVID-19 Vaccine

1. Florida
2. Georgia
3. South Carolina
4. Virginia
5. Tennessee
6. West Virginia
7. Maryland
8. Pennsylvania



# Federal Retail Pharmacy Program

- Partnership between the federal government, pharmacy partners, and states to increase access to COVID-19 vaccination across the United States.
- This partnership involves 21 national pharmacy partners and independent pharmacy networks — representing over 40,000 retail and long-term care pharmacy locations nationwide.
- 1 million doses of vaccine being distributed nationwide with a limited number of pharmacies in each state.
- Walgreens was selected to be North Carolina's initial Pharmacy Partner and will receive 31,000 doses from the federal government to administer beginning February 12, 2021.
- Walgreens will utilize 313 locations with 52% focused on underserved areas.

# Federal Transfer Program

- State requests a portion of the State Vaccine Allotment to be transferred to a federal pharmacy partner.
- Before transferring the dosage, the State and pharmacy must agree:
  - How much vaccine they would like to allocate on a weekly basis, taking into consideration how many locations and how much vaccine would be needed for each location to optimize access but not dilute inventory.
  - Which product will be used (Moderna or Pfizer).
  - Which populations to target and if occupational or age-based screening will be required.
- South Carolina has been using this program for three weeks with selected pharmacies receiving between 7,400 and 8,500 doses per week

## **Partnering with a local hospital or local public health department**

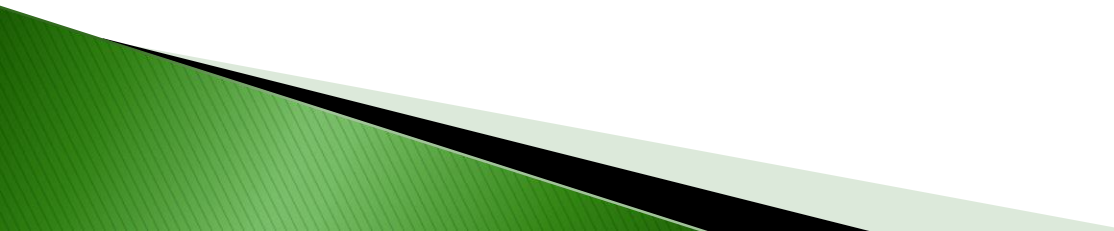
- Many hospitals and local health departments are overwhelmed.
- Hospitals are focused on taking care of patients.
- Local Public Health Departments may not have enough providers to administer the vaccine long-term.
- Halifax County and Durham County Public Health Departments have transferred doses to Independent Pharmacies to assist them in administering the vaccine.

# Summary

- Pharmacies will face some of the same challenges with reporting to CVMS and demand for the vaccine as have the hospitals.
- Pharmacies – both chains and independents stand ready to administer the COVID-19 Vaccine across the State in both urban and rural communities.
- Easy, familiar and convenient access point for the vaccine from a trusted health care professional.



# Retail Priorities with Vaccine Rollout

- An estimated timeline for when North Carolina will enter Group 3 - front-line retail workers continue to ask when they can get the vaccine and employers do not know what to tell them.
  - An easy to navigate system that distinguishes between Group 3 and Group 4 employees.
  - A uniform statewide vaccination plan instead of navigating 100 different county plans.
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